The Village

www.thevillage.co

Issue #237 September 2023

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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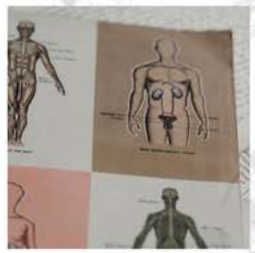
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TheVillage Issue 237 September 2023

inside

Bringing you village life for almost 25 years

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Front cover: A colourful narrowboat at Hopwood. Picture by Dennis Brown.

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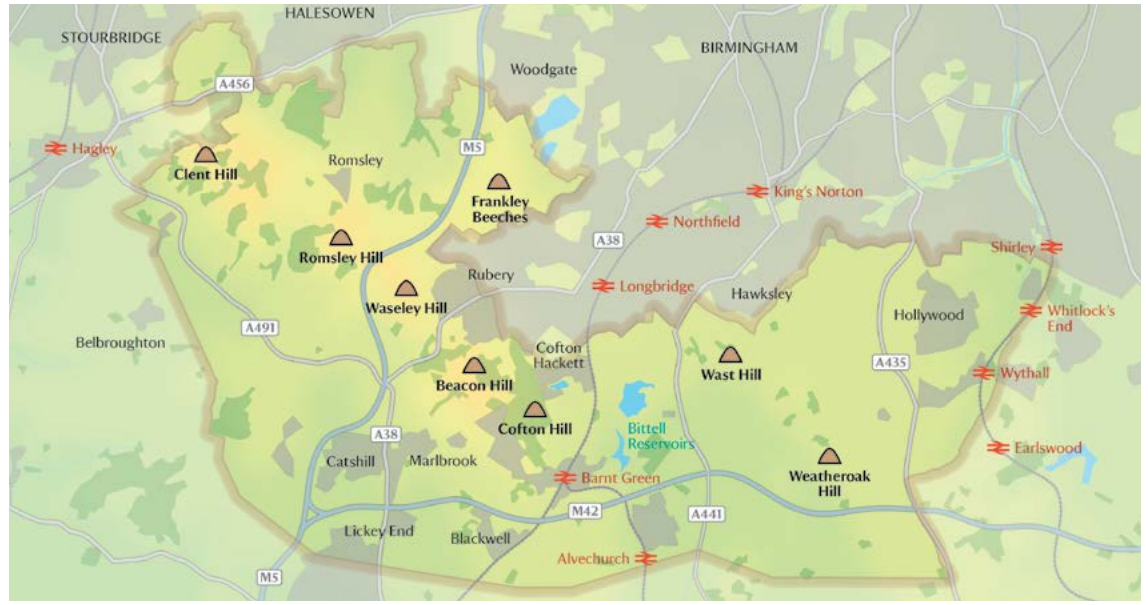

HIGH HOPES IN THE HILLS

A FAR-SIGHTED plan to create a regional park with *The Village* area at its heart is starting to gather momentum.

The 8 Hills Regional Park is the brainchild of the National Trust, which is now asking the people of this area what they think of the idea.

If it came to fruition, the park boundary would run from the Birmingham border in the north to Alvechurch village in the south and from Wythall in the east to Clent in the West.

The hills inspiring the proposed name of the park are: Weatheroak, Wast, Cofton, Beacon, Waseley, Romsley, Frankley Beeches and Clent.

The whole of the 50-square-mile park would be within Bromsgrove district and the National Trust is hoping that the district council will adopt it into the long-awaited Local Plan.

This would help to embed it into decision-making, although the park could still achieve its aims outside the remit of the local authority.

The National Trust says the aim is to "increase local people's access to the area for health and well-being while protecting and enhancing the landscape, its biodiversity and connectivity". Already established English regional parks, such as Colne Valley and Lee Valley, aim to maintain a "green lung" for London and the location of the 8 Hills Park would serve a similar purpose for the residents of south Birmingham as well as helping to improve the area for those fortunate enough to live within it.

Above: National Trust project manager Helen Armstrong explains the 8 Hills during an event at Lickey Visitor Centre. *Picture/Keith Woolford.*

Top: The study area for the proposed regional park *(National Trust)*

The National Trust says: "The regional park is not about stopping development of houses but about creating a landscape that boosts nature, recreation, active travel – such as walking and cycling – and sustainable farming, while accommodating potential housing growth." Among the plans are the creation of an 8 Hills Trail that traverses the width of the park, a new country park and localised schemes, such as enhanced visitor facilities at Forhill picnic site and the creation of a route for cyclists and walkers along the route of the Wasthill canal tunnel, where there is no towpath.

Ruth Bamford, head of planning at Bromsgrove District Council told *The Village*: "We support the National Trust's ambition with the 8 Hills Regional Park as a way to get local people more engaged.

"As a council we aim to encourage people across north-east Worcestershire to get more active and creative, and enjoy their local open spaces.

"We are working with the National Trust to better understand how the vision of the 8 hills could be achieved through the planning system, but any final decisions on the content of the local plan will be taken by Bromsgrove Council members."

To find out more and to give your views, visit www.8-hills-regional-park-spatial-framework.co.uk/

The interactive survey is open until September 4th.

TASTING TIME: Village home-brewer Colin White (second left) listens to the early verdict from the experts at Attic Brewery after making 3,000 litres of black IPA at their HQ in Stirchley, Birmingham.

Businessman Colin, aged 50, first created the brew at his home in Barnt Green and got the chance to see his recipe produced on a bigger scale after supporting Attic's fund-raising for a bar in Birmingham.

Called Eclipse, and with a target alcohol ABV of 5.2%, Colin's is the first black IPA Attic has made.

It will be launched on tap and in cans at Attic Brewery on September 7 from 5pm.

Larder's weighty success

ALVECHURCH Community Larder has saved 3.5 tonnes of food going to waste over its first six months – and that is just produce from its main providers at Fareshare/Foodiverse.

A spokesman said the total would be more once food from Asda and Farm Foods and donations from local people were included.

He added: "Our primary aim when we started was to reduce food waste, we feel that we are being successful and, of course, we are helping families who need a little support.

"However, we need to emphasise that up to 70 per cent of food waste is in our own cupboards, so please have a look and donate what you don't want.

"You can bring anything to the larder between 10am and noon on Thursdays or when it is open for customers. You can also leave donations in the collection boxes outside the entrance to the library or in the dentist. We take food that is not beyond its use by date and any toiletries."

The larder is now open twice a week, on Fridays between 11am-12.30 pm and on Thursdays between 8-9pm, with more than 50 people attending regularly.

"We have more than 50 volunteers, helping to sort food on Thursday mornings or supporting our shoppers to collect food when they attend the larder," the spokesman added. "Without our volunteers this would be an impossible task."

Festival fun for all

ELLA KEELEY (above, left) with sister Megan and parents Tom and Laura and the Blackwell Music Festival tickets she won in a raffle.

The festival on Saturday September 9 promises to be the biggest yet, with seven acts in the line-up, headed by The Weekend Anthems Band – formerly called Killerstream.

The event also claims to have the cheapest festival bar – with festival ale at £3.50 a pint – as well as top food outlets and a kids zone with activities for the young, such as facepainting, circus skills sessions and a bouncy castle.

Ella won the tickets for her family in a draw at Blackwell's summer festival and is looking forward to celebrate turning eight years old shortly beforehand. Dad Tom said: "These community events really make Blackwell what it is."

A few tickets are still available from Blackwell Village Store or via: blackwellfestival.org.uk. Advance tickets are £12 for adults, £6 for under-16s with under 5s free. If there are any tickets left on the day, they will cost £17 for adults and £10 for under-16s on the gate.

Speeding alert

BEOLEY Parish Council has secured a vehicle-actvated sign to help combat speeding through the village, especially past the school. The feedback from local residents has been positive and the council is now working hard with Worcestershire County Council to secure a second sign for Portway.

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Celebration for new curate

A weekend of celebrations concluded with an informal buffet lunch at the Trinity Centre, Lickey, following a Sunday service as parishioners contributed a feast of food to welcome their new curate, *writes Keith Woolford*.

The Rev Louise Beasley was ordained by the Rt Rev Anne Hollinghurst, acting Bishop of Birmingham, in Birmingham Cathedral the previous day.

She will work alongside the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Lickey, and St Catherine's, Blackwell, the Rev Sheri Gidney, during her three years of training.

Previously a primary school teacher, Rev Beasley is a keen sportswoman, enjoying cycling, swimming and running, and has represented Team GB as a triathlete.

A special cake was baked by Oven No19 for everyone to share.

Welcome to Lickey and Blackwell: Rev Sheri Gidney (left) and new curate Rev Louise Beasley. Inset: Rev Beasley and the special cake.

RESIDENTS at Hillcrest Park, Portway, with the new defibrillator device funded and installed by Beoley Parish Council for the people of Portway.

King's Worcester schools shortlisted for prestigious awards

THE King's Worcester Foundation is delighted to announce that all three of its schools, King's St Alban's Prep School, King's Hawford Prep School and King's Worcester have been shortlisted for a number of prestigious awards in this year's Independent School of the Year (ISOTY) Awards.

Covering a broad spectrum of categories, for the second year running King's Worcester Senior School has been shortlisted for the title of Co-Educational School of the Year.

King's Hawford Prep School has been shortlisted for the Pre-Prep School of the Year Award, whilst King's St Alban's Prep School receives a shortlisting for the award for Student Well-being.

The Independent School of the Year Awards are designed to showcase independent school success stories and celebrate the extraordinary pupil experience provided during the last academic year.

This year there are 23 award categories, with hundreds of entries submitted by independent schools from across the UK.

The news of the shortlisting is another fantastic achievement for King's, which sits alongside it's recognition in *The Sunday Times* Top 10 West Midlands Independent Secondary School league and the recent Top 20 UK Nursery Group Award received by the King's Nurseries for the third year running.

Gareth Doodes, Foundation Headmaster at King's Worcester, commented: "We are so delighted to have been shortlisted in so many categories once again this year. It is a wonderful acknowledgement that our schools are whole-heartedly dedicated to our co-educational provision from Nursery through the entire educational journey to our Sixth Form.

"It is a well-deserved testament to our enthusiastic, dynamic and experienced staff."

Finalists will be announced in September, with the awards ceremony taking place later in the year.

King's Foundation: Outstanding, friendly schools for children aged 2 to 18 to make friends, expand their curiosity and excel in their studies.

A popular student: King's pupils with a furry friend.

Camouflaged: Two young pupils hide in the bamboo.

The King's Worcester Foundation offers independent education for boys and girls ages 2-18 years across Worcestershire and beyond.

Discover more at their Autumn Open Mornings on

- Saturday 30th September (King's Senior and Sixth Form)
- Friday 6th October (King's Hawford Prep)
- Saturday 7th October (King's St Alban's).

Visit **www.ksw.org.uk** for more information.

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To find out more visit: **ksw.org.uk/ShapedByKings** #ShapedByKings

*Includes Bromsgrove

Students succeed at Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove School has a strong history of student success stories. They are proud to produce independent, inquisitive and entrepreneurial students, who aren't afraid to take on a challenge (and often, win!).

BROMSGROVE School's Young Enterprise team, Monito, has achieved remarkable success in 2023; crowned winners at the 2023 Company of the Year Finals they then had the privilege of representing the UK at the impressive European Finals held in Istanbul in July.

It was a proud moment in Istanbul when the team's Managing Director, Owais Iqbal, received the JA Alumni Europe Leadership Award.

The students had already gathered several awards, including the Creativity Award at the Herefordshire & Worcestershire County Final, as well as the Best Company titles at both the County and West Midlands Area competitions.

The students encountered numerous challenges related to communication and teamwork, but persevered through these difficulties, ultimately forming a highly organised, efficient, creative, and dedicated team. They are the school's most successful team in this prestigious and demanding competition.

What the team has achieved and learned throughout the year is truly remarkable. Their primary objective was to make a positive impact on others during the UK cost-of-living crisis, prioritising the importance of financial education for young people over making a profit.

Their products included a "saving koala" designed to reward 5 to 10 year-olds with tokens to save towards their wants, a "learn to save activity booklet" and an accompanying storybook to the saving koala to facilitate conversations about saving money between parents and children, experienced tremendous success.

They sold a substantial number of products at local trade fairs and to students and staff on the school campus.

Monito also hosted the *Money-Smart* podcast series which aims to teach teenagers about more complex financial concepts through the use of guests.

Monito: Members of the Young Enterprise team.

On returning from Istanbul, Owais said: "This year has been transformative for all of us, as we have developed invaluable skills in problem-solving, public speaking, teamwork, and communication – even overcoming our initial doubts and wanting to quit. Moreover, this programme has unearthed hidden talents within us."

Following their success, and based on the vital need for financial education in society, five members of Monito have now registered the company and intend the grow the business beyond the Young Enterprise Programme.

FIVE students from Bromsgrove School, entered 2023 WGS Economics Competition and have been named the National Champions.

The students were challenged to give recommendations on what the Monetary Policy Committee and Government should do to achieve target inflation (2%) and 3% growth by Quarter 4 in 2024.

National Champions: WGS Economics competition.

The team produced a sharp, well researched and bold presentation which suggested: the bank rate should remain at 4.5%, the Government should subsidise renewable energy innovation and development, Corporation Tax should be raised to 30%, the top rate income tax of 45% should be applied from £100,000, and that there should be a real terms cut in Universal Credit, increasing it by 6.7% in line with average wage increases rather than in line with inflation.

However, they ultimately found that the target was not achievable within the time frame given.

They faced some incredibly challenging questions from the judging panel which they fielded in a considered manner. The panel was very impressed with their consideration of the complexity of the challenge and their bold yet sound suggestions.

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Preparatory, Year 3 to Year 8: **Saturday 23rd September**
Senior School 13+: **Saturday 7th October**
Sixth Form: **Saturday 14th October**

Individual Visits Welcome

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For more information please contact Admissions
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bromsgrove-school.co.uk

RGS DODDERHILL a place for discovery

WHAT do we want for our children? Many parents have been asked about their aspirations for their children's future, and the response usually involves the words "success" and "happiness".

Whilst all parents do their best for their children, they have to rely on schools to help them.

At RGS Dodderhill we help every child find themselves, be happy to come to school each day and achieve success in whatever area their talents and interests lie.

We do this by having small class sizes, a focus on pastoral care and offering an incredible number of choices both within the curriculum and through co-curricular clubs.

This year RGS Dodderhill welcomes a new Headmaster, Mr Tom Banyard, who has been Headmaster of one of the most successful schools in Thailand. Mr Banyard is passionate about helping young people and joins the school with his daughters Edith and Nina.

He said: "We have joined RGS Dodderhill because I couldn't imagine a school better suited for helping my children grow. The staff are incredibly warm, supportive and talented and it's amazing the difference it makes to all of us to be greeted with smiles each morning.

"The school site is a hidden gem, beautifully green with facilities most smaller schools would envy. Edith fell in love with the forest school and the chance to be outside; Nina loved the playground and the stunning sports hall.

New adventures: New Headmaster Tom Banyard sits in the gardens with RGS Dodderhill pupils.

"My wife and I love RGS Dodderhill as there is no sense of privilege or cliques, just a lovely sense that everyone is there to help and support."

Despite having a long history of success, RGS Dodderhill is always looking to improve and move forward.

As part of the RGS Family, the pupils have the option of joining RGS Worcester after finishing at RGS Dodderhill, as well as having access to facilities across the family of RGS Schools. In addition, the award-winning RGS Digital Learning Programme means that pupils are well-prepared for the digital world.

Whilst the school is proud of being a close and kind community, this doesn't mean that the options available to pupils have to be limited.

The curriculum involves forest school lessons, music, cooking, drama and textiles alongside the traditional core subjects. Additionally, there are an ever-growing number of clubs enabling pupils to do more, from debating to dance, sailing to horse riding, from chess to participating in sports teams, choirs or in a multitude of other adventures. The important thing is that pupils can follow their own passions and discover new ones along the way.

RGS Dodderhill holds pupils at the heart of everything, however it also does its best to support their parents and carers. Wrap-around care is offered from 7.45am to 6pm for those who need it, with homework and breakfast club there to help.

The school keeps class sizes small, and there are still places available for boys aged 2 to 11 and girls aged 2 to 16.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT RGS DODDERHILL

If you would like to learn more about RGS Dodderhill, visit us on our Open Morning on Saturday 7 October. To register, please visit www.rgsw.org.uk

No Nimby negativity

Dear Editor – Nimbys everywhere (*"Not In My Back Yard"*), you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Stopping other, younger people from aspiring to what you have by restricting development is just about the most selfish practice one can imagine.

All of us live in some previous person's development.

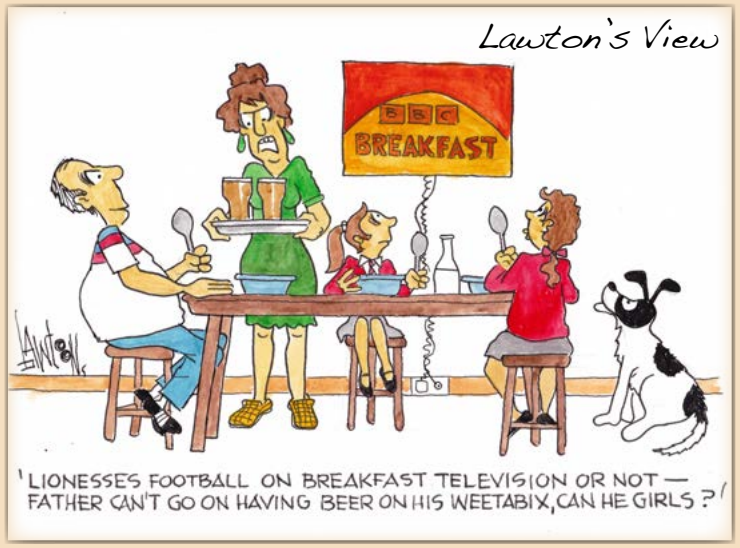
Look down at Alvechurch and its surroundings from 30,000ft. There are vast areas of green space. A little bit of relaxation of the obsolete Green Belt policy would not harm anyone.

If Nimbys would look beyond their self-interested noses and instead, look at the needs of our country and ultimately, everyone's – even their own – long-term interests, our economy and infrastructure would be in better shape.

My family has been around for a while – 45 people lived on Coopers Hill in the 1902 census. Today the number is about 31, including children. That is an absolute disgrace.

And now, in the July/August edition of *The Village*, we have "The Alvechurch Residents Association" being set up to oppose the redevelopment of that ghastly 1970s eyesore, the former Alvechurch Sports & Social Club, right in the village centre.

I have no idea who the association's chairman, James Brown, is but he and the parish council would do better if they sat down with the developer and produced an acceptable, viable development that provides local employment and blends in with the more attractive elements of our village, instead of screaming: "Not in my back yard!"



We run a successful B&B and there is plenty of demand for accommodation for a small hotel.

Take this opportunity to develop a viable, pleasant environment that provides what is needed instead being so negative.

John Impey
Alvechurch

Is 20mph safer?

Dear Editor – I feel I have to comment on a Mr Allen's letter in the July/August issue of *The Village* regarding 20mph zones.

He refers to how much safer he feels 20mph zones are. I would refer him to a study by the Institute of Advanced Motorists. This shows that over a set period, the number of serious accidents fell nine per cent in 30mph zones, and by seven per cent in 40mph zones. Slight accidents fell by five per cent and three per cent respectively. Whereas over the same period, in 20mph zones, serious casualties increased 29 per cent and slight casualties by 19 per cent.

Regarding pollution from car exhausts: one would presumably drive at a steady 20 or 30mph. There should be no need to accelerate or decelerate, but at 30mph I would be in, say, fourth gear, where as at 20mph I would no doubt be in second gear.

Every time a diesel or petrol car fires, it will produce pollutants. I would estimate there would be an increase of 30 per cent in pollution at 20mph over 30mph. Air quality will get worse in a 20mph zone, of that there can be no doubt.

Addressing Mr Allen's comments that at a slower speed, a driver's field of vision widens. I can assure him it does not. To maintain 20mph you need to select a low gear, and give perhaps 50 per cent concentration to your speedometer.

During this period you are not looking at the road ahead. This may well be why accidents increase in 20mph zones.

D Davenport, Marlbrook

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk
or write to: Letters, The Village, The Limes, Swan Street, Alvechurch B48 7RR

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication. We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is September 10th 2023.

WHERE'S VINNY?

Phoebe Shemar, aged six, from The Oakalls and a pupil at Finstall First School, shows off the Mini Vinny she won for finding the little creature in July/August's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village*.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email or post – see details on bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on September 10 2023. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

Consider others when parking

Dear Editor – I often get asked what sort of complaints I get in my county councillor's inbox.

I would have say that by far the biggest complaint from local residents is that of parking and speeding.

We have such a wonderful variety of small local businesses in Barnt Green Village, but Barnt Green itself has expanded and we also have an increasing number of older residents.

This expansion means that many residents have turned to using the car, as opposed to walking or cycling, which would have often been the case in the past. While I am pushing for the "Bromsgrove On Demand" bus service to be extended to Barnt Green and Rubery, there is definitely a lack of parking for the increased number of cars on the roads.

When I have visited the High Streets in my division I have noted with dismay the amount of able-bodied drivers parking on double yellow lines, disabled bays or even zig-zags.

The reality is that there is available parking probably 50 or 100 metres away along the same road or in a side road. Walking is good for our health and is what all councils are promoting.

Therefore, all I ask is that fit local residents consider that double yellow lines, disabled bays and zig-zags are there for a reason.

Parking on double yellow lines and in disabled bays may well remove the ability for a disabled person to reach the shops and parking on dropped crossings and zig-zags are a danger to partially sighted, disabled residents, and those using a zebra crossing.

I would also like to remind drivers that causing an obstruction on the pathway or blocking entrance ways is an offence and the entrance way starts from where the kerb begins to drop, and not when it is flush with the Tarmac.

Elderly drivers, or those with restricted movement in their neck, may well need that extra visibility when exiting their driveways, so please keep them clear.

On the speeding issue, as a solution, I am working with our Safer Neighbourhood Team to provide the right level of reassurance and enforcement in every community that wants them on a regular basis.

Furthermore, there is a Community Speed Watch programme, which empowers communities to play an active role alongside the safety camera partnership in tackling the problems of speeding in their neighbourhood.

As part of this programme, trained volunteers verify and record the registration number of vehicles seen to be breaking the speed limit.

For this programme the Safer Neighbourhood Team requires six able volunteers over the age of 18 to come forward. They would be given

continues overleaf

full training, insurance and hi-vis jackets. Should any *Village* readers feel that they would like to be part of this scheme, could they please contact either me directly or the parish council. It would be great to have local people help tackle local issues that affect us all.

Let us all work to keep our roads and residents safe and have consideration for all of us in the community.

For any of you that wish to pop down to speak with me I am planning to have a surgery on alternate months prior to the parish council meetings.

Coun Adrian Kriss
County Councillor for Beacon

Sunflower surprise

Dear Editor – I have just noticed the number of sunflowers which someone has planted on the verge of Hopwood hill, on the right going up towards Birmingham. . . What a delight!

Thank you to the person/people who obviously scattered the seed earlier in the year. The only sunflower of mine which germinated this year, got broken off by the wind last week, before it had flowered.

Felicity Rixon
Hopwood

Alex appreciation

Dear Editor – It is said that when you like something you tell two or three people about it, and when you don't you tell everyone you can.

I have lived in Lickey for more than 40 years and have been used to many people complaining about the Alexandra Hospital in one way or another or often saying not very nice things.

Just recently I have had to be admitted, and I found a hospital where the staff – everyone, doctors, nurses and assistants – could not have tried harder.

Despite the pressures they are under it seems everyone had a smile or a kind word. I hope by reading this we will start to appreciate the gem we have. Maybe by writing this I will be telling more than two or three people.

Sandy Mackintosh
Lickey

Hedge handover

Dear Editor – It worked! Someone has taken on the problem hedge (*you may remember in the July/August issue of The Village magazine, Peter McHugh asked villagers for help with maintaining an 'unclaimed' hedge on Red Lion Street, Alvechurch*). I would like to know who has taken the responsibility for the hedge. Please could you let *The Village* know if it was you?

Peter McHugh
Alvechurch

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THE PERFECT PLACE

With outstanding reviews, Cofton Park Manor Care Home has scored a perfect 10 on independent care home review site carehome.co.uk

BRILLIANT reviews by residents and families have given a Cofton Hackett care home, Cofton Park Manor, the perfect score on independent review site: www.carehome.co.uk.

Home Manager Kerry Hill said: "We are over the moon that our care given to those at Cofton Park Manor is worthy of a 10 out of 10 rating. The team thrive off positive feedback and this really motivates us to keep doing what we are doing."

The website gives people a chance to share their experiences of a care home with others and can be used as a tool for others when understanding the quality of a home.

One family member quoted on the website said: "I can't praise enough; we have been welcomed with open arms. It's such a relief knowing my mum is being well cared for."

Another family member said: "We have been completely overwhelmed with the kindness, compassion and welcome from everyone at Cofton Park Manor."

The Lickey Road home, which opened in January, is part of the award-winning Hamberley Care Homes, who were named Residential Care Provider of the Year in 2022.

Kerry added: "We have a beautiful, homely environment, but the shining stars are the team. Every single person who works for Cofton Park Manor is experienced in working in the care home setting.

"As well as the skills and knowledge, everyone has a real passion to be working in this sector and a love for the role. The team want to put a smile on people's faces, we want to make things better, we want to be there to help – nothing is too much trouble."

A perfect 10: Residents proudly show off Cofton Park Manor's outstanding score.

Over the moon: Home Manager Kerry Hill and Community Relations Lead Matt Brown at the care home's last classic car show.

CLASSIC CAR SHOW AND FAMILY FUN DAY

Following the success of their first classic car show in June, the Cofton Park Manor team look forward to opening their doors once again and welcoming the community in for another family fun day, and the opportunity to see some classic cars, courtesy of the Pride of Longbridge.

Alongside the incredible display, there will also be live entertainment, a magician, a BBQ and a prosecco bar, as well as a visiting children's party bus for younger guests to enjoy.

The event, which will take place during Birmingham Heritage Week will also include a seminar on the history of the local area from the Lickey Hills Historical Society, and a fascinating talk on the intricate work of micro-engraving.

All are welcome to come to the family fun day which will take place on Sunday 10th September between 2-4pm – no need to book, but please do contact the team on 01213 872722 or email Matt.Brown@hamberleycarehomes.co.uk if you'd like a tour of Cofton Park Manor on the day.

To find out more about the luxury care home, and their exclusive offer for new residents, book your tour today on 01213 872722 or email Matt.Brown@hamberleycarehomes.co.uk

Cofton Park Manor | 466 Lickey Road | Cofton Hackett | B45 8UU

20 Years Ago

From **The Village** archive

THE COVER of the September 2003 issue of *The Village* featured a view across the Arrow valley towards Newbourne Hill from Grange Lane, Alvechurch, after a hot summer spell. The valley is a lot greener 20 years later after the very wet July we have all endured around here.

THE DUST SETTLES: Bulldozers began clearing the Black Paddock, Alvechurch, (below) after the sale of the land for housing by St Laurence Church was given the go-ahead by the diocese in Worcester. The development was called 'The Copse'; these days it is just a part of School Lane.

KEEPING THE MAGIC: There were fears Fern Cottage (right), Cofton Hackett, a boyhood home of *Lord of the Rings* author JRR Tolkien, would be overshadowed if plans to demolish Fletcher's arcade next door to build flats went ahead. "There's not going to be a lot of magic with that next door," said owner Colin Taylor.

TEACHER FEATURE: Sophie Steward and her reception class at St Andrew's School, Barnt Green (above) were the focus of our regular item in this issue.

10 Years Ago

From **The Village** archive

THE OPENING of the new allotments at Alvechurch was celebrated on our September 2013 cover by Eileen McHugh and Kate and Emily Glover. The 40-plot site on Old Rectory Lane was eventually established by Alvechurch Parish Council after a 10-year search for land following the loss of established allotments on School Lane.

BEOLEY SKULL 'IS THE BARD'S'

A NEW BOOK claimed to prove the skull beneath St Leonard's church, Beoley, which featured on the cover of *The VIllage* in 2009 (right), really was that of William Shakespeare. Historian Simon Stirling, in *Who Killed William Shakespeare*, said the clues to the playwright's end "are etched into the Beoley skull".

THE SPY WHO LIVED HERE

THIS ISSUE featured another book, this one detailing the life and arrest of Alan Nunn May, who grew up in Barnt Green, went on to study physics at Cambridge in the 1930s – where he was exposed to communist ideas – and was then involved in British and Canadian research into atomic weapons. Recruited by Russian agents in 1944, by 1945 he had supplied them with a sample of uranium 233, among other things. He was arrested and jailed later that year. The full story was contained in *The Atom Spy and MI5*, by John H Smith, who had discovered his home in Bittell Lane, Barnt Green had a connection to the Nunn May family.

GEARING UP: A few of the 45 villagers who took on the annual cycle ride from The Crown Inn at Withybed Green along the canal towpath to Digliss Basin at Worcester to raise money for Acorns children's hospice.

Home care made easy

Windmill Hill Care is more than just a care service . . . with a friendly team helping clients to enjoy their independence and to thrive in their own homes.

Meet the team: Some of the fantastic staff at Windmill Hill Care (clockwise from top left) Jess, John, Billy, Cerys, Leanna, Debbie and Kacie gather together in the sunshine.

WINDMILL HILL CARE is a local, personalised service for the community of Barnt Green and surrounding villages, allowing people to be cared for in their own homes by a team of hand-picked, highly qualified carers.

The care service is managed by Jackie Grant RN, who has been running Windmill Hill Care for more than seven years and remains a validated nurse.

Jackie established the business to cater for demand in the area, and the expansion of its client base is a testament to their high quality care.

Windmill Hill assesses each client and compiles a personalised plan which can be regularly reviewed and changed, according to the client's needs and wishes.

Jackie and her team know that ensuring their clients retain their independence is a priority, and a range of support is available, including advice, sit-in and respite care, sleep-in and waking night services and domestic housekeeping visits.

They are registered with the Care Quality Commission and pride themselves on their bespoke and person-centred care.

The quality of care that Windimill Hill provides is evident when you meet the team.

As well as being skilled and friendly, it's clear that they care deeply about their clients and ensure they go above and beyond to give them the best service possible, and provide family members with peace of mind.

During busy periods, trained paramedics also work for Windmill Hill Care as back-up staff, ensuring a consistent high quality standard of care.

Jackie's son, Billy Grant, has been part of the team for a few years and, with a Business Management degree, is tranisitioning into a managerial role. He is looking forward to enhancing the systems of the service, while maintaining the high level of care provided. He brings with him knowledge of current systems and databases, and will be involved in recruitment.

Jackie said: "We remain true to care delivery in the community and our original care team remains in place. We also now have two trained moving and handling instructors among them to further ensure best practice.

"All of our carers are qualified, experienced and, we think, fabulous. Thanks to them, their hard work and their input on a daily basis, we as a team continue to strive and achieve 'person centred services', so if care is necessary in the home, it is enjoyable.

"We are also always happy to give advice on care if it's required"

Jackie added: "We'd like to thank all of our current service users and families for their support and open communication with us; it is much valued and appreciated by us all."

Windmill Hill Care will be holding a coffee fundraising event for MacMillan Cancer Support on Saturday 30 September, 2-4pm at St Andrew's Community Centre, Barnt Green. All are welcome to join for tea, coffee and cakes.

Windmill Hill Care are happy to advise and assess any need required.
Call 0121 448 3348 for further information,
or email Jackie@windmill-hill-care.co.uk
Visit the website: www.windmill-hill-care.co.uk

Summer celebrations

Mount Battenhall Retirement Village held its annual summer party, celebrating residents and families of the Retirement Village.

Smiles all round: Mount Battenhall welcomed visitors and families to their summer garden party.

MOUNT BATTENHALL Retirement Village in Worcester hosted a summer garden party on Saturday 8 July, held within the luxurious grounds, restaurant, and outside terrace.

The charity event, in aid of breast cancer and Worcester's local Acorns Charity, started at 4pm with entertainment provided by "The King of Swing" Andy Bayley, and "Pig Roast" Birmingham served a delicious hog roast and vegetarian option, which was followed by strawberries and cream.

Attended by well over 80 people, the stunning landscaped Italianate gardens and grounds at Mount Battenhall presented a fabulous backdrop.

Sarah Harper, Sales and Marketing Manager at Mount Battenhall, said: "The summer garden party has become an established event in the calendar at the village. It was wonderful to see so many friends and families of our owners joined by representatives from local businesses and interested parties all supporting Acorns, and Worcestershire Breast Unit Haven charities."

The Mount Battenhall team sincerely thank all the supporters, guests and owners for their generous contributions and donations to the charities.

Mount Battenhall is a Retirement Village set in the heart of Worcester, located just 1.5 miles from the city centre.

It comprises 48 apartments available to purchase or rent within either the Grade II* listed Mount Battenhall building or the newly purpose-built apartments.

Independent living for the over 60s with prices starting from £250,000.

For more information, call the friendly sales team on 01905 347121.

(All properties are leasehold and are subject to monthly fees; an event fee applies on any disposal. Not applicable to rented properties).

Something for everyone: Serving delicious food and drink.

Enjoying the sun: Residents and visitors enjoyed celebrating.

Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

Glastonbeoley bigger and even better

Glastonbeoley music festival returned this summer to entertain villagers and visitors with a range of fantastic local music, in a brand new, bigger venue.

GLASTONBEOLEY opened its gates at a new venue this year, at Redditch Rugby, Cricket and Hockey Club.

The music festival, which is a highly anticipated event on the local music calendar, welcomed approximately 1,500 visitors over the weekend to enjoy great music and good food and drink, with friends and family.

There was plenty to do for all ages, with bands and artists playing across two outdoor stages, and inside the clubhouse. There were craft stalls for people to browse between musical performances and food wagons, a beer marquee and cocktail bar kept visitors in good spirits. Children's entertainment including fairground rides kept little ones busy.

Debbie Jones, who worked tirelessly with her team of volunteers to organise the festival, told *The Village* that this year "was one of our best attended events so far. A cracking crowd on Friday of night music-loving funsters. Saturday we greeted lots of families, with children enjoying the kids entertainment, while the adults relaxed in the sun with a pint and a bite to eat."

Debbie - who also performed at the festival as one half of the duo "Imnar", with her musical partner Guitar Dave (along with supporting musicians) - managed to run the event from a mobility scooter, following a recent accident in Bath, however she decorated it appropriately for the festival.

Some of the festival team: Led by Debbie Jones, front centre.

In total, 38 bands and artists performed over the weekend, entertaining the crowds with a wide range of different genres.

Debbie said: "The club also had a great time, raising essential money to support its activities, and the Glastonbeoley team – including all of the musicians who played for free – have raised thousands of pounds to put in our charity pot for local causes. We will be inviting requests for support soon!"

Glastonbeoley will return in 2024, with the promise of "more brilliant music, a bigger outside bar, more food stalls, craft stalls and kids activities. "Whatever folks need, we've got it covered" Debbie said with a smile.

Lots of excitement from visitors.

Smiles and plenty of drink in the beer tent.

The new set-up: At Redditch Rugby, Cricket and Hockey Club.

Clockwise from left: fun on the rides. Families enjoy the day. Dancing to the bands. Face paints and glitter for all. Delicious food was enjoyed by all. Fun in the beer tent. Imnar on stage. Much merriment by festival goers. Hatstand perform. Uncle Yeti strike a pose. Vaccine 7 rock out.

Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

Festival of fun

A WEEKEND of entertainment, music and fun was had by hundreds of families at Bromsgrove Carnival.

The Carnival has been running for more than 100 years. The theme for this year's event was "Magic at the Movies", which saw activities such as outdoor cinema screenings, and wonderfully dressed visitors and performers.

Although the outdoor cinema screening on Friday evening had to be postponed due to poor weather, the parade on Saturday kicked off in bright sunshine, with the colourful floats leaving Bromsgrove town centre, heading towards Sanders Park.

Bromsgrove Town Cryer, Kevin Ward, led the convoy, and crowds lined the route as the decorated trucks made their way to the park, carrying children dressed as film characters.

Following the floats were further groups and clubs in costume, with balloons and banners.

A lot of effort had been put in by all the participating groups and schools to ensure they represented their chosen film well, with fierce competition for *best float* and *best walking group*.

Although there were intermittent rain showers throughout the afternoon, all the children remained in good spirits as the procession arrived at Sanders Park. Here, visitors were able to enjoy local food stalls, a fun fair and live music throughout the day.

There were further performances from local dance schools during the afternoon and visitors could explore small business stalls throughout the day.

The outdoor cinema screening of *Cool Runnings* during the evening was able to go ahead as planned.

Special guest and actor Mark Williams, announced Millfields First School and Pre-School as the winners of the best float with their *The Lion King* entry and GirlGuiding Bromsgrove won best walking entrant with *Finding Nemo*.

On the move: A *Little Mermaid* themed procession.

From top: Stage Door are *The Blues Brothers*. The winning *The Lion King* float.

Below: A few of *101 Dalmations*.

Family favourite films: *Mary Poppins* and *Finding Nemo*.

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Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

Making music in school

The Midland Sinfonia spend much of their time performing at local events and hosting concerts, but they also run workshops and music classes and this summe visited two village schools, Crown Meadow First School in Alvechurch and Blackwell First School.

Pupils enjoyed a series of music classes led by the sinfonia as part of their OutReach initiative. The sessions included rhythm and sound activities, and more than 100 children took part.

Shulah Oliver, TMS artistic director, led the sessions with the schools and said: "We offer a range of opportunities for children to interact and learn about music – to develop an enjoyment and interest in the subject. All the pupils thoroughly enjoyed our visit and are a credit to each of the schools".

On the workshops, Crown Meadow First School said: "The children loved the Music Workshop. Thank you for all Midland Sinfonia has done for our school."

More details of the OutReach programme can be found at www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk.

Horsing around in the hills

THE Bilberry Wake, a popular event at the Lickey Hills Country Park, managed to snag one of the few days of sunny weather this summer.

The event, dates back hundreds of years to when horses were ridden over the hills.

The modern day version of the event, sees competitors of all ages (although mainly children, some adults did get involved), build their own hobby horses with the help of the Lickey Hills Park Rangers and Lickey Hills Society members.

The "stables", where the assembly of the horses took place, was located in the School Room. Ranger Penny Marriott helped as colourful socks were stuffed with straw to create the horse heads, and completed with eyes, ears, a mane and finally fixed to a suitable stick ready for action.

The racecourse, which led riders around the WWI building next to the Visitor Centre, was overseen by Ranger Dave Beardsmore.

After an exciting race, and ribbons and badges handed out to all riders, the winning horses received an extra handful of hay.

A French finale

AS part of Bromsgrove Festival, The Midland Sinfonia closed their season with a concert at their home venue in St Laurence Church, Alvechurch.

The concert "French Fancies" was dedicated to works from composers across the channel, and conducted by Dawn Dexter. Symphonies including *Meditation from Thais* by Massenet and *Bolero* by Ravel were played to a crowded audience, with Faure's *Requiem* to close the show.

Soloists Isabelle Palmer, soprano, and baritone Aaron Brewer-Jenkison also performed, as well as regular performers at the TMS concerts The Oakville Singers and nearby guests, the Barnt Green Choral Society.

Village open art surgeries

BARNT GREEN based artist Joanne Winson will be taking part in the upcoming Birmingham open studios event.

Joanne will be opening her studio on the 23rd and 24th September.

Joanne said: "There will be flower and dog prints, plus cards for sale. There will also be cakes and tea in the garden".

She also added that 25% of any profit will be divided and donated to The Brain Tumour charity and Alzheimer's Society.

For more information on how to visit the open art studios, please visit www.birminghamopenstudios.co.uk/artist/joanne-winson

FIVE members of The North Worcestershire Artist Collective will be opening their studios to the public.

Michelle Doidge, Jane Aston, Suzanne Nicholls, Edwina Mackinnon and Julie Marcus will be taking part in Worcestershire open studios, and welcoming the public to look around their home studios between 19-28 August (you may still have chance to visit).

Jane Aston, an Alvechurch artist said "We are all excited to be part of Worcestershire Open Studios and have been working hard preparing our art and studios for visitors. We all have different styles of working but we all share a love for chatting to people about art, sharing tips and offering advice. We will have paintings, prints, cards and calendars for sale."

Members of the North Worcestershire Art Collective.

See www.worcestershireopenstudios.org for more information.

If you missed your chance to visit the open studios in August, or want to see more of these local artists, The North Worcestershire Artist Collective will be holding art exhibitions at:

The Artery Studios, Worcester between Friday 27th October and Wednesday 1st November from 10am till 4pm

Blackwell Community Hall on Saturday 25th November and Sunday 26th November between 10am and 4pm

Park safari

A PROGRAMME of meetings has been implemented to support the Lickey Hills Country Park and the Rangers. The summer meeting was held outside, in the field to inspect areas of concern and interest.

Members of the "Consultative Committee" joined the annual "safari" of the park, led by Head Ranger Steve Hinton. Steve took the group to the Duck Ponds, where he provided an update on the newly planted second orchard, adjacent to the car park. Each of the new trees planted in the orchard are now well established, with more to be planted soon.

The group were also led to an area just above the ponds; the source of the River Arrow. Plans are currently being considered to enhance this little-known and important area of the park.

They then travelled to the site of the fire which devastated areas of Rednal Hill in 2022. Rangers have seen further fires irresponsibly lit by visitors this spring and summer, and remind visitors regularly to bring picnics (and take home their rubbish) instead. However there have been fewer BBQs and fires than in previous years, likely due to the wet summer.

Summer safari: The group set off to explore the park.

An unlikely source: The River Arrow.

A trip to the Duck Ponds.

Balsam bashing

AS part of an initiative to help reduce the invasiave Himalayan Balsam in the Lickey Hills Country Park, several events have been organised to help clear the offending plants.

The plants can grow to 10 feet tall in one season. They were introduced by the Victorians as an attractive –and perhaps exotic – addition to their gardens and parks, however they soon crowd out native species. The seed pods then explode, scattering the seeds up to seven metres. Volunteers of all ages turned up to help excavate the area and were tasked with pulling up the plants and roots, before the seed pods exploded and spread the invasive plants further.

75 years of care

TO help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the National Health Service, a cake sale was held at the Alexander Hospital in Redditch.

A large variety of cakes and treats were on sale, purchased by generous staff and visitors to the hospital.

The proceeds of the cake sale were donated to NHS charities.

There were also specially made cupcakes, adorned with the NHS 75 logo, which were given as a small token of thanks to the hardworking doctors and nurses (and everyone else who helps to keep NHS hospitals up and running).

Cups overflow with Bromsgrove beers

BROMSGROVE Rugby Club hosted the annual Bromsgrove Beer and Cider festival this summer, allowing visitors to test different beers from across the area.

The festival, which was opened by Bromsgrove Court Leet, welcomed more than 2,600 visitors over the weekend.

More than 7,000 pints of beer and 2,300 of cider were enjoyed during the festival. The first beer to run out was Salopian's "Kashmir" and the first cider was Gwynt y Ddraig's "Black Dragon".

CAMRA awarded "Redditch and Bromsgrove Pub of the Year 2023" to The Weighbridge, in Alvechurch. The award was accepted by Chris Lamb, the licensee who celebrated the triumph accordingly, swigging from the trophy.

The Cross, in Finstall, also received a special award for winning "Branch Pub of the Year, for three years in a row".

One change which was missed by many visitors was the loss of the dedicated festival tankards this year. This was attributed to the rise of costs to run the event (and generally across the country!).

Hopefully they will be back again for future events . . .

Event organisers said they were delighted that 58 visitors joined CAMRA during the festival, and said it was "the best ever festival".

They confirmed that a total of £2,600 had been raised for the chosen charity of 2023; Avoncroft Museum. This sum included £1,060 of unused beer tokens, donated by generous festival attendees.

The provisional date for next year's beer festival is 27 – 29 June 2024.

Clockwise from above: The festival organising team, Bromsgrove Court Leet opens the festival, Blackwell Concert Band entertains visitors, Chris Lamb celebrates a win.

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See if you are suitable for IPL, have a chat with our team and have a patch test.

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These are only available on the day of the event.
You are welcome to attend on your own or book in a small group of up to four.
However, places are limited, so booking is essential to avoid disappointment.

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VHK WOMENS HEALTH

PERIMENOPAUSE, HRT & DESIRE

Tuesday 26th September | 7.30pm
The Garrity, Barnt Green

After the great success of our last Women's health event at The Garrity, Barnt Green in June we will be running the same event on Perimenopause, HRT and Desire this September.
This is a fantastic opportunity to come and hear about the common questions we get about the menopause and what you need to know about HRT.
We are thrilled that Dr Penny Gould will be joining us and Leila from Physio Advantage will be giving some top tips on maintaining a good pelvic floor.
We like to keep it informal and answer as many questions as we can from the audience.

Dr Penny Gould, Dr Heidi Kerr and Leila Holmes at the event in June.

Tickets are £10 which includes a drink on arrival.
Please email vhkwomenshealthclinic@gmail.com for enquiries and tickets.

Manage your menopause

Dr Heidi Kerr and Dr Vicky Hobbs, from **VHK Women's Health Clinic**, tell *The Village* about the challenges women face in perimenopause and how HRT can help.

THREE out of four women going through the perimenopause will have troublesome symptoms both at home and at work.

We often hear the word "overwhelmed" in our clinic, with women describing how they can feel more anxious, lack confidence, consumed by exhaustion and struggle with brain fog. Usual skills of decision making or multitasking can become challenging feats often leaving women feeling they are under achieving or under-performing.

Hormonal Replacement Therapy (HRT) is proven to be effective for both the psychological impact of menopause as well as night sweats and hot flushes (vasomotor).

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommend HRT as first line treatment for women with menopausal symptoms affecting quality of life in their 2015 Guidelines.

There are many HRT preparations offering a welcome choice for women. Ensuring women fully understand these different options is a priority for VHK.

There is now a vast amount of medical research around HRT which can be used to weigh up pros and cons to enable an individualised approach to treatment. For instance, migraine sufferers were previously denied oestrogen therapy, but now we have large studies showing us that oestrogen delivered through the skin (transdermal) is not associated with an increased risk of bloods clots or stroke.

Transdermal oestrogen is now considered the safest form of HRT to initiate in all women and can be given via a spray, gel or patch. Oral oestrogen can be used for some women and whist it carries a small additional risk of blood clots; this needs to be considered against the benefits it may offer in terms of symptom control.

Managing perimenopause: There are different options available to suit your needs. *Image: Shutterstock*

Progestogens are essential to protect the womb lining against the oestrogen impact, which if given unopposed in any women with a womb could lead to high-risk changes.
The options vary between the body identical progesterone tablet taken at night (Utrogestan), the hormonal coil (typically a Mirena coil), or separate progestogens combined either in the patch or as tablets.

The Mirena coil is a popular choice amongst patients and doctors often providing ongoing contraception and period control alongside HRT needs.

Testosterone is the third hormone that can help some women as part of their HRT regime. Testosterone is primarily indicated for distressing hyposexual desire syndrome, but many women find it helps with extreme fatigue.

While this latter benefit is not yet proven by science, testosterone prescribing requires a detailed assessment, including blood tests and discussion around benefits and potential side effects. It requires long term monitoring to ensure a woman's blood levels stay within the female range to reduce risk of side effects. It should also be used in conjunction with a psychosexual assessment and ensuring that any menopausal vaginal symptoms are fully assessed and treated with vaginal oestrogen preparations.

VHK WOMENS HEALTH

Without a doubt, women benefit from a detailed discussion about their individual needs and the time to explore their options.

VHK Women's Health Clinic value being able to offer this. If you would like to know more about HRT and how it may help you through your menopausal journey, or you are having problems with your HRT regime or would like to explore testosterone therapy please book an appointment at VHK Women's health clinic.

We will listen, guide and offer treatment solutions to improve menopausal symptoms and their impact on life.

For help and advice in managing your symptoms of perimenopause and other health concerns, book your appointment with VHK Women's Health Clinic: www.vhkwomenshealth.com

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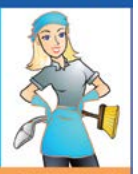

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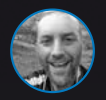
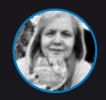


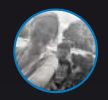
Martin Pryor
Financial Planner & Adviser

Business & Finance degree to Graduate training course at Prudential, leading to becoming a qualified independent financial adviser in 1996 and setting up PPM Financial Planning in 2006.



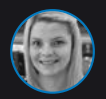
Nicky Lowndes
General Manager

Nicky has been at PPM Financial Planning since the very beginning in 2006 bringing with her 19 years of banking experience with HSBC.



Laura Siddall
Financial Planner & Adviser

Laura has 19 years of industry experience. Her role is to construct financial plans for clients using our cash flow modelling software, helping deliver true financial planning.

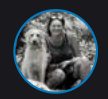


Laura Daniels
Mortgage Adviser

Laura joined in 2016, providing admin support whilst completing training to become our qualified mortgage broker.

Louise Wheeler
Paraplanner

Louise Joined PPM in September 2021, bringing with her 8 years of paraplanning experience and 13 years working within financial services.



Jodie Chilcott
Office Administrator

Jodie joined PPM from an accountancy background and performs a variety of tasks in the day to day running of the business.

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HOW TO AVOID AN INHERITANCE BILL

WILL the Conservatives abolish inheritance tax (IHT) if Rishi Sunak manages to win the next election?

The idea of ditching the levy is now being discussed by senior government officials, with the prime minister keen to come up with an eye-catching manifesto pledge on tax. But don't hold your breath. The £7bn a year cost of getting rid of IHT will be hard to meet.

Still, the good news is that there are many ways for families to plan ahead to reduce, or even avoid, a potential IHT bill. And it makes sense to do so, as record numbers are being caught in the net. Sensible use of gifting allowances and good estate planning can make a big difference. And private pensions offer huge opportunities to tackle IHT issues.

That's because in more circumstances, money you hold in a private pension does not count towards the value of your estate for tax purposes.

In other words, any pension assets you pass on to dependants won't be taken into account when your estate is assessed to see whether inheritance tax is due. In the past, that wasn't terribly helpful, since pension rights often disappeared on savers' deaths.

Today, however, it is possible to pass on a wide range of unused pension wealth.

If you have money in a defined-contribution pension plan that you've yet to use to buy an annuity – either an individual plan or a workplace scheme – you'll almost certainly be able to pass it on, though you'll need to specify to your pension provider who should receive the money.

Martin Pryor tells *The Village* what inheritance tax means for you and your family, and how you can use your pension to help to avoid expensive income tax.

For those receiving these assets, there may be no tax at all to pay on the money. If you die before 75, your heirs can draw on the money as they wish, with no tax due.

If you are 75 or over when you die, your beneficiaries will pay income tax on withdrawals at their marginal rate. Either way, the money is exempt from IHT.

MIND THE ANNUAL LIMIT!

Given these advantages, pensions have become a great way to plan for IHT.

To start with, it may make more sense to move into your pension plans those savings and investments that do fall within the IHT net. You'll even get income-tax relief on these contributions.

The only caveat here is that you must stay within your annual allowance, which currently prevents you from paying more than £60,000 into private pensions without tax penalties.

In addition, once you reach the point where you need to draw on your savings for retirement income, think carefully about which funds to use first.

If you have savings outside your pension plans – in an individual savings account (Isa), say – it may be sensible to use up this money before making withdrawals from your pension pot. That way you'll be running down an asset on which IHT could be chargeable before turning to one where IHT is not a consideration.

Finally, bear in mind that money inherited from pensions can also be bequeathed to subsequent generations. If your heirs don't use the pension assets you leave them, they can pass them on to their own dependants with no further tax issues to worry about.

Pensions can be a great way to have money cascade down through generations of your family.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner

For more information, please contact us
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The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate Tax Planning This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.

Find your way through the mortgage mayhem

Mark Meads discusses the chaotic mortgage market and how **Village Financial** can help to unpick and simplify your mortgage challenges.

WE have been very busy lately helping our new and existing clients to navigate their way through the twists and turns of the mortgage market.

Over the past year we have seen a number of rate rises by the Bank of England, this has in turn had a knock-on impact to mortgage rates.

People coming off a fixed-rate term or looking to buy a new home are finding it challenging to find a good deal with a competitive rate.

It maybe that your existing lender can help, or alternatively there could be a better deal out there. That's where we come in.

We will sit down with you and assess your current personal circumstances and plans for the future, look to find a mortgage that is not only competitive, but also meets your short and long term needs.

We work from a comprehensive panel which is representative of the whole of the market.

Mark Meads and his team Christine (centre) and Martine in Barnt Green are here to help as you navigate through mortgage mayhem.

And rest assured once you become a client of ours we will be there every time your existing deal matures, we will contact you well in advance and ensure you get the right deal for your circumstances, at that point in your life.

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Battle of the brightest

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

THE end of summer approaches and what a glorious summer it has been. For astronomers, it ends at the equinox, which this year is on the 23rd, at 7.50am, to be precise. For weather forecasters, it ends on the first of the month so I know which I would rather be.

The nearest full moon to this date is on the 29th which is the Harvest Moon.

Speaking of which, the full moon on the last day of August is the second one of the month so is considered to be a Blue Moon. In addition it is also at its closest to Earth so is described in the media as a Supermoon, appearing 14 percent larger than when it is at its most distant. It will, of course be its usual colour and look no larger than normal, except when close to the horizon but that is due to a different phenomenon.

Away from the full moons, when our skies are properly dark we can now see the Summer Triangle.

If you face south at about 9pm and look straight up, you can see one of the brightest stars in the sky. This is Vega, one of our nearest neighbours at a mere 25 light years away. It is about twice the size of our Sun and living at a faster pace so will eventually burn out long before it.

Off to the left, the next bright star is Deneb, sitting at the top of a cross of stars which form Cygnus, The Swan. This is a colossal star 200 times as big as the Sun but is about 2,000 light years away so appears no brighter than Vega. Isn't that amazing?

About half way down to the horizon is another bright star, the third in our triangle. This is Altair at the head of Aquila, The Eagle, flying towards the swan. It is also about twice the size of the Sun and even closer than Vega at about 16 light years. The curious thing is that Altair is spinning so rapidly it is close to breaking up, causing it to bulge significantly around its middle. Rather like some people I know. . .

Lower down and to the left a bit more, quite close to the horizon is that beautiful planet, Saturn. Time to get your telescopes out.

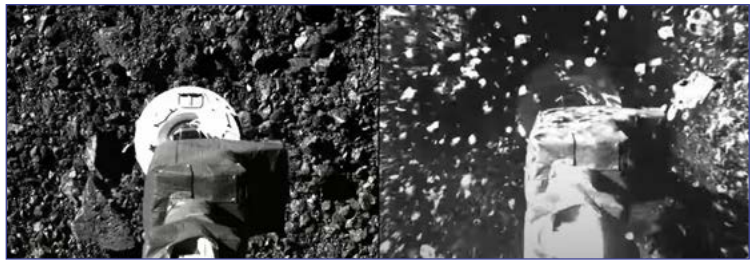
During September, actually on the 24th, a probe will return from the asteroid Bennu, bringing with it about 250 grams of rock and dust taken from the surface.

Bennu is quite tiny so has very little gravity. Landing on its surface would be like jumping into a ball pool (so, sounds like good fun). This meant the probe, called OSIRIS REx (which sounds rather like some sort of a dinosaur), couldn't land and had to back away immediately after grabbing what will be the oldest rocks on Earth. Let's hope all goes well.

September also marks exactly 35 years since NASA resumed flights of the Space Shuttle after the Challenger disaster. The orbiter Discovery lifted off from Cape Canaveral with five crew on board to put a communications satellite into orbit.

Much to the relief of the entire world, the mission was a complete success.

Blast off: September marks the 35th anniversary of the launch of the orbiter, Discovery. *Pictures courtesy of NASA.*



Making contact with Bennu: The OSIRIS REx Probe.

WHERE WAS SUMMER?

Alvechurch amateur weatherman **Phil Thomas** records the changes.

DESPITE all the wishful thinking, July was a colder and wetter month than normal, with mean temperatures of 15.9C, which is 1.2C below my recorded averages (between 1990 and 2022).

The rainfall in July was also very high, it was the highest of any month's rainfall in all my local data from 1990 to 2023. On the evening of 8th July, 63.9mm fell in the early evening, resulting in flash flooding in Alvechurch, with both housing and the local Coop being flooded – some of you may have found your streets turned into rivers. There were also periods of quite severe thunder and lightening.

Up to the 15th, August has been quite a cool, changeable month. The mean temperature of 15.9C was 0.5C below the local average.

There have been a lot of dull and chilly days, making it feel like autumn is on the way, although we did experience a glimpse of summer on the 9th, 10th and 11th, the warmest of the three days was on the 10th recording 25.4C.

The Outlook

TOWARDS the end of August, we are likely to see unsettled weather, which heavy rain and thunderstorms clearing, though these may linger in the extreme North East.

Cloudy and, at times, humid conditions are likely to follow with some showers, mainly in the West. Beyond this, fairly changeable conditions are most likely, with more settled weather developing, which could turn hot in the South.

Overall we are likely to see a mix of sunny spells and cloudy weather with showers.

Temperatures are most likely to be a little above average as we progress into September, and a changeable pattern is likely towards the end of August and into September.

Although it feels like autumn might already be here, there is some hope for a lingering few days of summer!

Above: A lake forms at Alvechurch train station.

Above: A shower cloud gathers over Rowney Green.

Raindrops threaten to fall off a leaf.

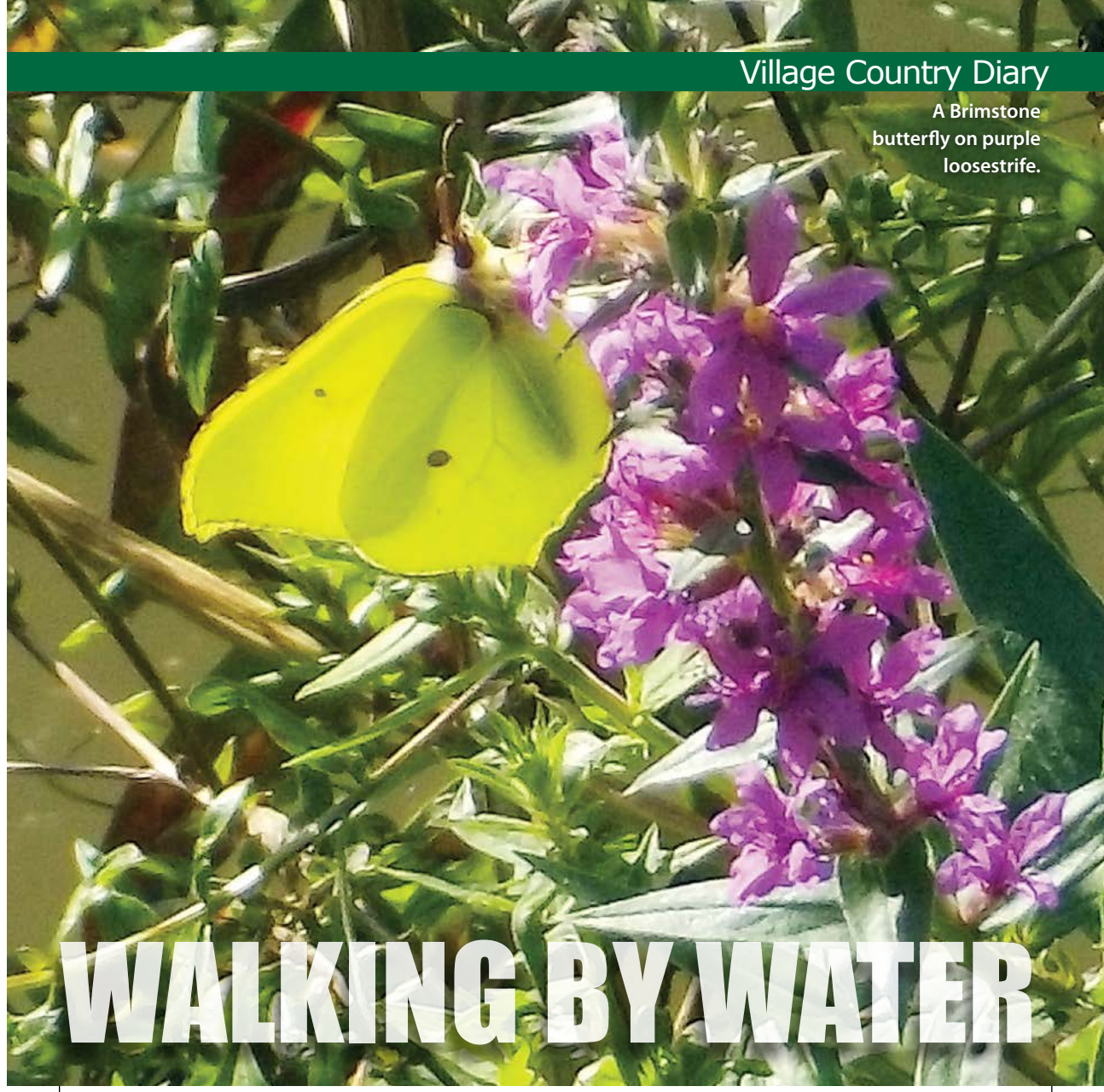
July 2023

Mean Max	20.1C	2.0C below average
Mean Min	11.8C	0.4C below average
Mean	15.9C	1.2C below average
Rainfall	169.7mm	245% of average
Sunshine	183.5hrs	84% of average

August 2023

Mean Max	20.8C	0.8C below average
Mean Min	12.0C	equal to average
Mean	16.3C	0.4C below average
Rainfall	34.2mm	46% of average
Sunshine	74.9hrs	48% of average

More information at ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com*** You can see an improved HD weather-cam, updated at one-minute intervals, at: ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com/webcam_alvechurch.php***



A Brimstone butterfly on purple loosestrife.

WALKING BY WATER

Mary Green leads us along the canal in Alvechurch, and introduces us to some of the biodiversity we can find there.

I WAS greatly cheered walking through Alvechurch in the cool wet days of July to see that the district council has put up notices explaining why they have left the flowering plants uncut on some of our green spaces.

There are not many of these flowering, insect-friendly patches, but it's a start. And towards the end of July, I was contacted by some friends who had seen a pyramidal orchid, flowering on a road verge nearby.

You may remember we found one last year along the canal. We fear this was dug up. If so, it will be unlikely to grow elsewhere as orchids are very dependent on the fungi their roots grow with. So I'm not telling you exactly where this one was. They are infrequent round here. Now that I've seen the two, I am wondering whether they used to be more common. For once, the verges on those minor roads

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have been left uncut since spring, just as the canalside had last year.

These orchids flower later than others, so are very susceptible to mowing and cutting, even in hay fields. Once more, the orchid shows us when nature is being managed in an ecologically friendly way.

I've noticed on my recent walks that more of the hedgerows have been allowed to grow out fully too – up Wheeley Road, between Alvechurch and Blackwell, for example – and were showing good fruit forming.

It does look like a good year for native fruits and seeds. Hazels have been full of nuts, including some of the semi-cultivated kind called filberts which grow locally.

By now the squirrels will have had them as they are the earliest nuts. The ground is thick with their remnants as I walk under them in August. Hazels are particularly susceptible to variable spring weather as they have to synchronise the ripeness of the dangly yellow pollen-bearing male flowers with the opening of the little red female flowers. This year that was OK.

The oaks all set full of acorns though they don't seem to be maturing and I think some have acorn galls.

I'm not sure what they will do this year: it looked like being a mast year but may not be.

The phenomenon known as a mast year, where all the trees produce nuts heavily together, is not peculiar to oaks though we notice them most. Apparently, pecan trees in north America do the same thing. This does not seem to be connected with weather but is a way of ensuring their reproduction and collective survival. They produce so many some years that the mammals and birds that eat them can't devour them all.

In the late summer, as often, I found the canal to be a good place to see biodiversity. When the hedgerow flowers have died down and the fields are cut for hay, you can't see so much there, but flowering goes on longer along the canal so you can generally see more insects too. The hedges here are generally not over-cut so have all those fruit and host birds.

Angelica: Stands out against the canal waters.

Spotted in hazel trees: Filbert nuts.

I walk up the canal from Withybed towards Bittell. The aquatic fringes (the flowers that grow directly by the water) are still in flower in August and into September. They are in direct sun and have access to water in dry weather (not that that was a problem this year!)

Unfortunately, some of the stretches along here are not as biodiverse as they used to be, and you can still clearly see the signs of where the Canal and River Trust mowed them frequently in the growing season a couple of years ago.

Alexanders: A handsome seaside plant.

These are patches where there is lush grass and a few other flowers, but nothing like the diversity there is in other places. In the better spots which weren't over-cut, you can still see purple loosestrife, greater willow herb, angelica and meadowsweet flowering, and if it's sunny they will be covered with insects including butterflies.

There are good "emergent" plants along this stretch – plants that actually root in water. These include several kinds of water plantain and arrowhead, and a lovely stand of reed-mace. These are important for water-birds but also for insects.

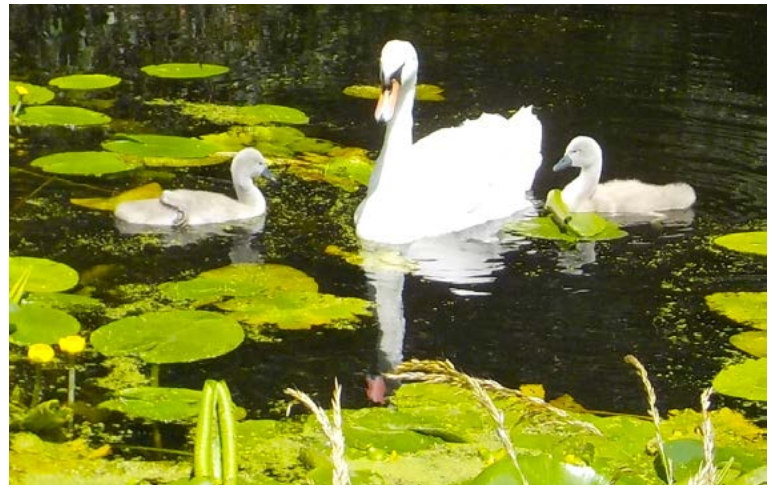
Occasionally, less common plants appear by the canal. Recently I found agrimony, a plant of old pasture turf, now uncommon here. I know it grows in one field nearby and guess it came here by its hooked seeds being carried by a walker or dog. The canal is a carrier of unusual plants: near one bridge here is alexanders, a large handsome seaside plant!

In the past, we've found some less common insects along here, such as the elephant hawk moth. This has huge caterpillars which look a bit elephantine, and which like to eat willow herb.

A butterfly you might spot at this time is the brimstone, a very distinctive yellow. This insect has a fascinating life. It is one of the first to appear in spring, as it has over-wintered as an adult. To hibernate, it hangs up in ivy, looking for all the world like a yellowed ivy leaf. This spring, I actually saw one emerge from some ivy – a lovely ivy hedge that grows outside a house on Station Road. I saw another one in Bear Hill Drive. So they often find their shelter near houses.

The butterfly needs food, and in spring it goes for yellow flowers to get its nectar from. You may well see it on primroses and dandelions, where again it is camouflaged. It then has to find a shrub called buckthorn to lay its eggs on. This isn't common any more but exists in our old-woodland remnants, like Birches Lane and along the canal. The caterpillars feed off this.

When the new adults emerge, they like to feed on purple/pink flowers for nectar. So, they love the canalside,



Nesting on the dead arm: A family of swans, with a territorial cob.

Buzzing with bees: Ivy is perfect for insects.

A flash of blue: Holly blue butterfly resting on greenery.

feeding from purple loosestrife and willow herb in August and early September. They're more obvious then, so look out for them as they feed up before disappearing into the ivy.

Another butterfly out and about this time of year is the holly blue. It's a little pale blue butterfly with darker wing-borders, wider in the female. The larvae feed on holly in the spring in its flowering season and on ivy during the autumn when it comes into flower – the latest of our native plants. There were lots in spring and I've seen quite a few of the second brood already.

Ivy is a useful flower for late nectar for many insects as well as being this one's food-plant. You will find it buzzing with bees, wasps and hoverflies on a sunny day. You may see late butterflies like comma, meadow brown and gatekeeper on the ivy or on brambles.

If you walk up this stretch of canal throughout the year you will always find good wildlife. The aquatic fringe plants and their insects don't appear

A big critter: An Elephant Hawk moth spotted in Alvechurch.

till summer generally: in spring the land side of the towpath usually has good flowers.

That's why the aquatic side shouldn't be cut until the winter when it's finished and dies down. Unfortunately, last year the Canal and River Trust cut it in September. I don't know if that has contributed to some of the loss of wildlife this year, but it may have.

Normally I would have said that you could find lots of dragonflies and damselflies during the summer and

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right into September. But this year there have been fewer than I've ever seen. It's perhaps not surprising in the cool wet weather, but even in the hot dry days of June there weren't many. I thought it might be to do with weather, but no.

I visited Lifford reservoir in June (a little gem tucked away in south Birmingham) and it was absolutely humming with dragonflies and especially damselflies, flying coupled as they do and landing on all the waterside plants.

Since the climate is the same, I can think of two differences that might account for this.

Dragonflies have a complicated life cycle, living as larvae in the water for a year or more having hatched from eggs laid on waterside and emergent plants.

They are carnivorous and feed on other insects. So the plant habitat matters a lot to them, as does the water quality. The canalside habitat was overcut last autumn right at the water's edge.

Round Lifford, it is very lightly managed. The water quality in the canal isn't great. Lifford is one of the rare local places with good water quality, party because of an unusual level of limestone in the water.

This all affects not only the dragon flies themselves but also the insects and other small creatures they feed on. Could be coincidence.

As you pass the dead arm of the canal you may see the resident swan pair and their cygnets. The cob (the male) is sometimes aggressive – they are very protective parents.

You will also unfortunately see American pennywort floating in the canal, an invasive plant that doesn't fit into our ecosystems so is hard to get rid of.

You may also see some of the later flowering plants here: orange balsam and bur marigold, both waterside and becoming less common.

The hedges are all full of seeds, berries and nuts: along here you will find hazel, elder, hawthorn, spindle, blackthorn, roses, wild cherry, cherry-plum, bryony and of course the lovely brambles which have been ripening since early July but are still flowering.

They are vital for butterflies, often the only flower around in late summer, and providing good cover from birds, so they are a great mating ground for later butterflies.

Someone has called brambles nature's dating site. Birds love the fruit and so do we.

As September progresses, the canalsides are good for fungi too – and were unusually full of them in the wet July and August. Welcome autumn!

■ **Here's a poem (right) I wrote while walking home from the middle of Alvechurch.**

A damselfly rests on leaves
Image by Phil Thomas

Lawn

We are under your feet, waiting for the mower.
I am cinquefoil, in the corner, gold as the sun
I'm self-heal, indigo-blue to ease your wounds
Then lady's bedstraw, pillowing you to sleep
In a soft yellow cloud. Birds foot trefoil
Blue butterflies' breakfast, and my little cousin
Medick, for human health and hungry bees
With clover, honey-full, sucked on for solace.
Daisy of course, don't overlook me
The day's eye, open as the sun is long
Mother of a family who are also here
Cat's ear, hawkbit, and glowing moon daisy
With mighty knapweed, tall and strong
Purple as you like it all summer long
And yarrow sweet and bitter for your pains.
Buttercups come and go, beloved of children
Sorrel waves red and tall, sharp to the tongue
Good Friday Grass has gone back underground
With chickweed and the wayfarers' blue speedwell
Even a chance-come pignut, food of earth
Nestling like all of us among the roots
And fungi, who may thrust into your world
In autumn and surprise you with our power.
When you cut us, you will not hear our hurt
Though you can smell it. But remember this
You cannot live without us and our kind
But we will still be here when you are gone.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

Let's stick together

EARLY Autumn is a time for getting together in the bird world. With the hectic schedule of pairing up, breeding, looking after young and the moulting of old feathers for new all done, rather than just looking after themselves, many species feel the need to become sociable. "Flocking together" as it were. The two main group activities in question are feeding and resting.

In the garden you will see feeding parties flitting in and out at various times in the day.

This will consist of a main group often joined by other species, for example long tailed tits, which look like flying fluffy lollipops, become much more visible at this time.

They will travel as an extended family but may be joined by other members of the tit family with the possibility of maybe a nuthatch or goldcrests thrown into the mix too.

Similarly, finches will flock, too, so look (and listen) out for goldfinches, greenfinches and chaffinches seeking out seeds.

These foraging parties gain the advantage of sharing feeding strategies for the fledglings and sites of plentiful food sources. Lots of pairs of eyes have the added advantage of spotting hungry predators too, both feathered and furry.

Possibly the most interesting form of social activity is roosting behaviour where birds gather together, usually at long held locations, performing choreographed rituals before settling down for the night.

You may have been lucky enough to see a starling murmuration, without doubt one of the wonders of the natural world, incidentally, the best one I've seen was in Redditch town centre but more on that another day.

However, you are much more likely to see corvids - the name for members of the crow family – roosting in substantial numbers on our patch. There is currently a roost building on Wetheroak Hill with hundreds of jackdaws and crows having supper on the now soft trimmed fairways of the golf course at dusk, before taking off together at a seemingly predetermined signal to gather in the nearby trees. All flying in sometimes very large groups to the roost site in a spectacular cacophony of noise and movement, only to fall silent together once their places in the roost are assigned.

Nut and natter: Goldfinches get together on feeders.
Picture by Paul Wilde

Like any social group there is a status hierarchy with the best places often in the central, higher branches of the roost.

As well as a place of warmth and security which saves the birds' energy as the temperature drops, the roost is also a source of information exchange.

There is evidence to suggest that corvids are able to communicate on, amongst other things, advantageous feeding grounds. They will leave the roost at first light, splitting up into feeding parties and fly out to their favoured locations which could be more than ten miles away, returning in the evening.

The roost itself builds over the summer months, peaking in winter and finally fragmenting once breeding begins in spring.

If any readers are aware of local corvid roosts containing large numbers of rooks, jackdaws and possibly crows which are usually less sociable please get in touch, it would be interesting to map out the *Village* area roost sites.

If you are lucky enough to be able sit out in the garden in the evening, do remember to look up and you'll soon get to know which local birds fly off to their evening roosts, gulls in my case.

Finally, a polite reminder to keep your eyes and ears open at this time of year as migrant birds pass through returning to their wintering grounds around the world or alternatively overwinter here after breeding further north.

The Bittell reservoirs have a good lists of both but the unusual could be flying over or taking a break near you soon. **JL**

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Lawn to be wild!

'No-mow May' has grown as village gardeners take up the challenge of helping insects and our environment, writes **Annette English**.

IS anyone reading this old enough to remember having to keep filling up your car windscreen wash bottle because you needed to keep cleaning off the insects from your windscreen?

I remember driving to Wales on holiday with my mum and dad when I was little and my dad having a special cloth in the car he used to keep for cleaning the windscreen.

But we don't seem to have to do that now . . .

Have you ever wondered what has happened to all those little insects?

Why are insect-eating creatures and birds having such a tough time?

Research suggests it is all to do with habitat loss as well as the widespread use of pesticides and climate change.

A *Bugs Matter* study undertaken in May 2022 found an alarming decline in insects, which is reflected in the loss of wildlife more generally across the country.

Conservation charities Buglife and Kent Wildlife Trust found that the flying insect population has declined as much as 60 per cent in the past 20 years.

This is a frightening statistic because insects and pollinators are fundamental to the health of our environment and rural economies.

So, how can we help in some small way?

"No-Mow May" was introduced as an idea to encourage people to let the grasses and flowers in their lawns grow and this has been taken up by many residents across *The VIllage* area. On Callow Hill Road, Alvechurch, for example, where "no mowing" has meant there is an abundance of wildflowers blooming among the grass of some residents' lawns.

Many of these gardeners have carried on with the "No Mow May" idea and instead of destroying a lot of insect life when lawns are cut again in June, the residents have continued letting their lawns bloom and consequently there are lots of areas where the insect

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Wilder side: On the Birmingham Road service road in Alvechurch, previously neatly mown stretches of grass have been allowed to grow out the over the past few years.

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life is increasing and flowers are still blooming. How wonderful!

In 2019, Bromsgrove District Council declared a "Climate Emergency" and as part of their action plan, the following motion was passed in July 2022, that: "*This Council changes its grass verge cutting and mowing regime to allow wildflowers to remain in bloom during the height of the season when bees, butterflies and general small wildlife rely on the pollen from wildflowers to flourish.*"

This was to let some of our grass verges grow for longer so that the wildflowers and grasses that the insect population rely on, had time to seed and grow again the following year before they were mown down.

After this motion was passed, a small working group was set up in Alvechurch to see how we could take this idea forward.

We met with the district mowing team over a period of eight months to look at possible areas that could be kept longer without compromising sight lines at junctions and roadsides. Progress reports were made to Alvechurch Parish Council and ten areas have been suggested by the working group. These can be seen on the Cleaner Greener Alvechurch Facebook group.

The concept of leaving these areas to grow longer is being discussed at the next Alvechurch Parish Council meeting on September 11th at 7pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend to hear the discussion. I would hope that the project is passed unanimously as a very small way that the Parish can help to nurture our local wildlife and contribute to helping combat the effects of climate change, all with very little effort involved!

If approved, all the areas will have explanatory signs marking their boundaries such as the ones below.

The areas will then be mown again in late summer/autumn after the flowers and grasses have seeded and died down.

See if you can find the signs that have already been put up!

Top: A Bromsgrove District Council sign lets residents know why this large verge area on Withybed Lane/Branden Road, Alvechurch, has been left unmown, as does the sign (above) on the stretch of grass in front of Alvechurch Parish Council's office.

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WHAT'S ON GUIDE

***When we are married*: The dramatic society's most recent production.**

TAKE CENTRE (OR BACK) STAGE WITH ALVECHURCH DRAMATIC SOCIETY

ALVECHURCH Dramatic Society will be holding a "New Members Night" on Tuesday 5 September.

This event is a chance for anytone who has an interest in getting involved with the society – whether that be on stage, backstage, or front of house – to come along, meet the current society members and find out more.

For those who are interested, there will also be the opportunity to read for a part in their next production.

The event will be held at Alvechurch Village Hall from 8-10pm.

For further details, please email ads.alvechurch@gmail.com or call 07984 570763.

EVENTS

WINDMILL HILL CARE are hosting a Macmillan Coffee event at St Andrews Community Centre, Barnt Green on Saturday 30th September 2 - 4pm. All are welcome to join.

BLACKWELL MUSIC FESTIVAL will be held on Saturday 9 September between 12pm - 9pm, in the field opposite Dale Hill, Linthurst Rd, Blackwell, B60 1QG. Limited tickets are still availble to buy from Blackwell Village Store or www.blackwellfestival.org

ST LAURENCE CHURCH, Alvechurch will be taking part in the Heritage Open Days which are occurring throughout the country between 9-16 September. Their event will be held on Saturday 16 September, between 10am until 3pm. There will be a teddy tombola, bellringing, Morris dancers, dancing displays by Ark groups, model railway display, guided and self-led tours of the church and churchyard, storytelling, crafts and games, a sound bath demonstration and of course refreshments and cake! The last event will be Pimms and Hymns.

MUSIC

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA's first concert of the season 'DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY' will be held at 7.30pm on Saturday 23rd September at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch B48 7SB. Tickets: £13 (£3 students and under16)are available online at midlandsinfonia.co.uk or from Gin & Pickles and The Lounge in the Square, Alvechurch. Also, if available, on the door £14 (£3) card or cash. Doors and bar open at 7pm. www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They took some time off in summer but start meeting regularly again on 4 September, with an open session at the Crown Inn on 11 September. They are performing at the Heritage Day at St Laurence's Church on 16 September

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights.
Upcoming jazz nights will feature The Pedigree Jazz Band on 27 September.
There will be a Village Cinema event on 1 September, the film will be advised closer to the time.
On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm.
For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm.
For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA will host their Autumn Concert in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR on 10 December 2023.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, are back to rehearsals at St. John's Church, Greenlands Avenue Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings.
They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk.
They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services.
Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical.
Face to face groups have now resumed, meeting on Wednesdays 2-3pm at Longbridge Retirement Village and Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs weekly sessions for young brass, wind, and string instrument players to enjoy being part of a group who rehearse and perform together. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at St John's Middle School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm
Individual instrumental and vocal lessons are also provided at the centre. For more info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club, starting at 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7 pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or email r.g.henley@btinternet.com

DANCING

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Covid-dependent, so please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group! Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall, Bromsgrove. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For further details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case Friday has to change because of commitments in the village) from 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

LINEDANCE CLASS, every Thursday between 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

BIODIVERSITY WALKS

MARY GREEN is leading her next biodiversity walks on Tuesday 26 September, repeated on Friday 29 September.

They are moving outside Alvechurch this time for a harvest-time walk, possibly with fungi.

They start from Barnt Green station at 10.15am, suitable for anyone travelling by train.

The walk is slow and easy, taking about two hours, and may be muddy underfoot.
No need to book, just turn up. Any queries to alvbiodiv@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their autumn film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green.
On 15 September at 7pm the film will be a Western: A town marshall faces a gang of killers at noon. His pacifist Quaker wife makes decisions.
On 20 October at 7pm the film will be a Romance and Tragedy: Romeo and Juliet, one of the most beautiful film versions, with memorable score.
On 7 November at 7pm it will be a comedy starring Helen Mirren, where beautiful people make beautiful food in the south of France. Cultural barriers are broken.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. You can now find one of these hubs in Alvechurch. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, however you may find these in many different places such as community centres or libraries, and all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood.
Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall

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(Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. More info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact: Charles Deverill on cdjd26@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. from the village square. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time.
The next litter picking family session is on Sunday 8 October.
On Wednesday 18 October they will host: Fire safety: a talk by Chris Atkins from the Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue service.
AVS is always pleased to welcome new members—contact Martin on 07742 100007 or martinclarke1@btinternet.com.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be very pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for details: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers supporting local refugees who arrived under the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). New volunteers always needed – training and support given. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious belief. Full details at www.brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group is a group set up specifically to offer respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge. Contact Sheila (0121 445 2813) or Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Barn at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, but you must book in advance via www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk, which also contains full details of events.

RE-ENGAGE (formerly Contact the Elderly) aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook and Twitter.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. New members welcome. For more info visit www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heart-speakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmasters-heartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 3rd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or look on Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. Please email contact@wbdcs.org.uk for further information. Meetings start at 7.45pm. Non-members are always welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB usually meets on the second Weds each month, and offers the chance to make new friends, meet old ones and enjoy talks, demos and visits. Their September meeting will be at Alvechurch Cricket Club at 1.30pm. They are hoping to have their Annual Skittles Match, which is always great fun. Will there be a new Champion this year? Come along and find out, meet our friendly crowd and enjoy a cuppa and a chat. Visitors are £4.50, members £1 plus a raffle ticket for our monthly prize.

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old friends (includes a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am - 12noon at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info on 0121 445 1425.

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides regular opportunities for retired professionals and businessmen to meet socially and share common interests. A members' meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Weds each month, 10am–12noon, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. For more info visit www.bromsgroveprobus.co.uk or contact Jim on 01527 833531 bromsgrove1982probus.weebley.com

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. For more information please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955. New members welcome.

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and the odd reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall B60 3AH, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail

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their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com
The next walk will be held on Sunday 3 September, "A walk around Tardebigge" led by Sue and Roger Wardle. Meet at Tardebigge Village car park B60 3AH, contact 07838 737234 for more information. The following walk will be on Sunday 1 October, join for "A lovely countryside walk" led by Mike and Jean Collins. Meet at the Peacock Inn B38 0EH, contact 07773 019878 for more information.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Interested parties - contact: bgfcmembership@outlook.com or Facebook @ Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners).
Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength.
Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailingbarntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue— classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Where it exists, walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church.
Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park.
Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area.
Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins).
Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established.
Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.
Wythall Health Walk, Wednesday, 2pm, meet at Wythall car park B47 6LZ.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES Mat classes and 1:1 (apparatus). Irrespective of age, lifestyle, health and ability, we could all benefit from listening to our bodies: tuning in to our needs, building connections throughout the body, focusing on detail; challenging what is strong, building what is weaker, balancing the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Book a 1:1 apparatus session (Barnt Green) or a mat class (Rowney Green). Call 07759 590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

COMMUNITY Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Baptist Church, run by Bromsgrove council: Active Seniors on Tues 9.30–10.30am. and Zumba Gold on Thurs 1–2pm (each £3.50 per session). Fully-qualified, insured instructors on hand to help. For more info, call 01527 881289 or visit at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/things-to-do/active-bromsgrove

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Nige on 07966069956 or nige@mindfulmoves.co.uk

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB

A VILLAGE CHESS CLUB, based out of Alvechurch and Hopwood Cricket club have stormed to victory with their division two team in the Birmingham and District Chess League.

Captained by Dan Lamborne, the champion-winning team won all their matches in the competition (bar one, which was a draw).

The club have three teams in the Birmingham league and three teams in the Worcester league. Member Giles Stanton said "We are very excited to have a team back in division one for next season".

The club meet regularly in the cricket club on Wednesday nights at 7.15pm between September and May, and new players are always welcome. A new junior club is run from the Alvechurch Library on Saturday mornings from 11am.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) is now based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING runs classes at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays from 19th January, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. For info: http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS sessions to help you relax, find your inner peace, and elevate your life every Wednesday evening 7pm-9.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Suitable for everyone. Please contact Coz for more info & to book on 07770067349, you can find us on Facebook – MeditationWithCoz, or online, visit: www.meditationwithcoz.com

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

EVERY SCOUT GROUP in Bromsgrove (which includes Barnt Green, Blackwell, Catshill, Finstall and Lickey as well as the town centre) currently has girls and boys aged 6-18 waiting to join, their numbers restricted by

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the ratio of adults to young people. A few more adults helping would enable existing leaders to open more Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer units allowing more young people to experience Scouting and learn skills for life. If you could spare a few hours each month please contact us on 07539 031740 or visit scoutshw.org.uk

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 8 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Thursdays in Finstall (other days/ venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and their carer) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, ring 0121 445 1425 or email clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs ever-popular antenatal and post-natal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Courses are held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. Visit www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesday's. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG.
Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - NEW for September 2023 Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10 am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

GAMES & COMPETITIONS

SHIRLEY & WYTHALL CHESS CLUB meets at Wythall Community Association in Silver Street, Wythall, B47 6LZ, every Thurs from 7.30pm. The club has four teams playing in competitive leagues. Friendly atmosphere. New players are most welcome, just turn up or contact Barry Knee on 01564 826250

SPADESBOURNE Bridge Club plays at Amphlett Hall, Crown Close, Bromsgrove B61 8DW. Join the group for friendly bridge in a pleasant venue on Thurs evenings, 7pm for a 7.15 start. Table money for visitors is £3. Details from Jan on 01905 772256.

MONDAY Bridge Club at Barnt Green Friends Meeting House would like to welcome a few new members – for more info contact the organiser, Des Clarke, on 0121 453 3034.

FRIDAY Bridge Club meets at Burcot Village Hall every Friday evening. We play friendly, competitive Bridge in comfortable surrounds. We meet at 18:45 for a prompt start at 19:00. Refreshments are provided free of charge. For full details please contact the Secretary Ed Payne on 07950951122 or visit www.bridgewebs.com/friday

BROMSGROVE Bridge Club plays every Tuesday evening from 7.25 to 10.30pm at The Court Leet (a Hungry Horse Pub) 174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7AY.
We are very friendly and welcome guests or potential new members, with or without a partner. The club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union and the Worcestershire Contract Bridge Association. Contact the Secretary, Sally Flood, on 01527 832468 or sallyflood@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE Board Gamers is a friendly group which meets at 7.30pm each Weds at the Ladybird Inn, Aston Fields. More info on Facebook 'Bromsgrove Board Gamers'.

BARNT Green Duplicate Bridge Club meets at St Andrew's Church Hall each Weds afternoon and would like new members – contact Liz on 07538 092296.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB meets at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club, Birmingham Road, Alvechurch B48 7TA, every Wednesday at 7.15pm September - May.
The club has teams playing in both Birmingham and Worcester leagues. New players are welcome - just turn up or contact Giles Stanton on 07932 053621 or David Smith on 07540 304620.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request" as one of them will be doing at the Heritage Days at Tardebigge Wharf on 9-10 September For more information and the date of next meeting, contact mail@marygreen.plus.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

COMMON THREAD: Bring your knitting, crochet, patchwork, sewing etc. All are welcome. Friendly help and chat. Meets on the last Saturday of each month (apart from Christmas Day, of course!) in The Wheel at St. Catherine's, Blackwell B60 1BN.
Please bring your own drink to stay covid safe. Further information from Angela Bevan 0121 477 9924.

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroft-arts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

CURIOUS CUBS

THE BARNT Green-based outdoor playgroup Curious Cubs celebrates its second birthday this September.

With a different topic every week, Cubs has become a popular group for children (and their parents and carers) to visit, get muddy and discover something new. From mud kitchens and water tables, to the pirate ship and imaginative play areas, there is something for all curious young minds.
Learn more: curiouscubs.co.uk

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide HQ in Blackwell Road, Barnt Green. Tuesday morning and Tuesday afternoon sessions. Workshops with visiting tutors during each term. Enquiries from improvers and intermediate artists are welcomed. Jackie: 0121 445 4745.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. Season starts 18/10/23 at 8.00pm. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meet at The Village Hall on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7.15p.m. On Thursday 14 September we welcome Ros Anscombe and her colleague Avery Hill as our guest speakers. Their topic is on The Heart of England Forest, a local environmental charity, with a mission to help reverse centuries of woodland decline by creating and conserving a huge broadleaf forest across Warwickshire and Worcestershire, protected and secured for generations to come.
Guests are always welcome £3.50 including coffee and biscuits. For more information please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

ROWNEY GREEN FLOWER CLUB, meets on the fourth Thursday of the month except in December when it is the first Thursday. The next meeting will be on September 28th with Carole. Carole is from Pinks - the florist at Becketts farm. They have had Carole demonstrate for the group before, and she never fails to delight. The cost for visitors is £5, with refreshments included.
There will not be a Bank Holiday coffee morning, as advertised in the July/August issue of The Village as unfortunately no one is available to run it. However, the Flower Club would like to thank all those who have supported their coffee mornings in the past.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 0121 445 1915.

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome. For more information or advice you can call Monica Johnson on 01926 747822 or email at kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. You can also visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk to see more.

HELP & ADVICE

POPPIES' is a monthly bereavement support group — contact Rev Sheri Gidney on 0121 445 1185 for details.

DIVORCED/separated and having trouble seeing your children? Being excluded from their lives? The ASSOCIATION FOR SHARED PARENTING has been helping mums and dads in the family court system and problems over contact and residence for over 20 years. Visit www.associationforsharedparenting.org.uk

REPAIR CAFE is for those looking to save their money and fix broken or faulty household items. The Repair Cafe is part of an international network that keeps faulty appliances and clothes out of landfill and offers 'a cuppa' and a slice of cake to visitors while they wait. Visit the Repair Shop on the first Saturday of every month 2-5pm at All Saints Hall, Burcot Lane, B60 1AD. For more info: 07804251731 or repaircafebromsgrove@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY hosts one-to-one Computer Sessions for people wanting to learn the basics. If you need help with emails or advice on surfing online then pop in to arrange for free tuition, provided by volunteers. They can also help with online applications for Blue Badges and bus passes. For more info call The Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

GUIDE DOGS are looking for volunteers who could give a few hours of their time to help someone locally and living with sight loss, get out and about. Volunteer sighted guides support the person they are partnered with to feel part of the community.
No previous experience is necessary and full training will be provided and the role is extremely flexible! More information email MidlandsMSG@guidedogs.org.uk or visit www.guidedogs.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcross-wi.wordpress.com or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

continues overleaf

WANT YOUR EVENT IN *THE VILLAGE*?

If you have an event, or an idea that you would like to see us feature in *The Village*, please email the details to info@villageonline.co.uk. We would love to hear about your community news and events, so please let us know.

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BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7.00pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7.30pm on the second Tues every month at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence on 01527 822611 or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Jenny Jellie 07983 865372.

BROMSGROVE BELLES WI meets on the second Monday each month at the Meeting Room at St Godwald's Church at 7.30pm. For more info, contact President Helen Holbeche at helenholbeche@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurch-pres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more info call Pat McDonagh on 0121 628 4121.

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susan-barratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, Whetty Lane, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Anyone can just drop in on either night. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire —more info on 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please contact Lynda on 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The large bright hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

DO YOU HAVE A SPOOKY STORY TO SHARE?

We love hearing your chilling stories and unexplained encounters.
This October we will have more of our annual spooky stories in the magazine- we'd love to hear some new ones.
Tell us your creepy tales by 11 September and we'll put the best ones in the next issue of *The Village*.
Email: fran@villageonline.co.uk
Call: 07536 987950

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

The deadline for submissions, to feature in the What's On section of the upcoming October issue of *The Village* is 11 September 2023. Please email: info@villageonline.co.uk for more information or to feature in the listings.

Club of the Year!

Alvechurch FC has been named Club of the Year by the Birmingham County FA. It is a huge achievement for the club, which says it is "extremely proud" of the accolade.

The award recognises the club's 3 STAR England accreditation, the men's first team at Step 3, Women's first team at Tier 6, 70-plus affiliated teams, from U5s to Over 35s and three disability teams.

The club is also running disability recreation sessions, a WildCats Centre, Tiny Tekkers sessions as well as working in local schools and establishing a mental health football.

Club sporting director Mark Fogarty said: "I'm very proud of this award. The community section has been going 18 months and the foundation has only been in place for seven months and what we have achieved in that time has been tremendous.

"For me, it's about getting good people on board who share the dreams of the club, who work to improve all areas of our community. The club can only go from strength to strength with the team we have here."

Club chairman Richard Thorndike said: "I'm absolutely thrilled to receive the award for Club of the Year from Birmingham County FA.

"It's an accolade that must be shared equally across all areas of the club. Every volunteer and coach has contributed, and our club is much stronger because of them.

"I understand that we beat more than 70 local teams to win this award so we're an extremely proud bunch now," added Mr Thorndike.

Wonderful character: Rick Edwards in top-to-toe Alvechurch colours. Pictures/ ***Ian Macvie***

Final whistle for Rick

ALVECHURCH FC is mourning the death of "super fan" Rick Edwards, aged 72.

Rick, who was born in Alvechurch before moving to Redditch when he married, supported the club throughout his life, travelling the length and breadth of the country.

At away games he enjoyed nothing more than discussing non-league football with opposition supporters, always decked out in his Alvechurch colours and he loved giving his opinions on all things Church to fellow devotees.

Having such a passion for the club he savoured every second of last season's FA Cup run, proudly wearing a yellow wig to the likes of Cheltenham Town and Forest Green.

Rick featured in *The Village* magazine in 2018 after he was saved by a newly installed defibrillator at Alvechurch's Lye Meadow ground.

He was treated with it 15 times after suffering a heart attack before an air ambulance arrived to take him to hospital in Redditch. He was in hospital for a month, but was back watching his beloved Church as soon as he was released.

A club spokesman said: "Rick will be greatly missed by everyone at the club, as we say goodbye to not only such a passionate supporter but also a wonderful character."

Picture/ ***Ian Macvie***

KOBE JAE CHONG'S spot kick hits the back of the net in Alvechurch FC's 1-0 victory over Stratford Town. This was Church's second home win after earlier beating AFC Sudbury 1-0.

As *The Village* went to press, they were yet to win on their travels after going down 2-0 at Hitchin Town and 4-2 against Mickleover Sports.

AFC FIXTURES (Sept)

2nd FA Cup 1st Qualifying round
9th Royston Town (a) 3.00
12th Barwell (h) 7.45
16th FA Cup 2nd Qualifying round
23 rd Berkhamsted (a) 3.00
26th Leamington (h) 7.45
30th Long Eaton United (h) 3.00

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*Between 1.9.23 & 30.9.23.
T&Cs apply.